

## A Big Night for Judge Wallace in San Diego



*Justice Anthony M. Kennedy presents a crystal obelisk symbolizing the Devitt Award to Senior Judge J. Clifford Wallace.*

By David J. Madden  
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Senior Judge J. Clifford Wallace of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit received the American Judicature Society's 2005 Edward J. Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award at an Oct. 19 ceremony in San Diego.

Associate Justice Anthony M. Kennedy of the Supreme Court of the United States presented the award to Judge Wallace before a crowd of several hundred colleagues, friends and other well-wishers who filled the Spreckels Theater in downtown San Diego.

"No one could be a better teacher and a better symbol for what the award means," Justice Kennedy said of Judge Wallace, later adding that the honor was presented "on behalf of admiring colleagues, by your friends, by a grateful public and by judges around the world."

AJS President Neal Sonnett moderated the program. Also offering remarks were Chief Judge Barbara Brandiff Crabb of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, and Elder Dallin Oaks, a retired justice of the Utah Supreme Court and, like Judge Wallace, a leader in the Church of the Latter Day Saints. A third speaker, Chief Judge John M. Walker of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, was unable to attend, but his remarks were read by



*From left, Allen Haynie, Judge Barbara Crabb, Elder Dallin Oaks, Justice Kennedy, Neal Sonnett, Judge Wallace*

attorney Allen Haynie, a former clerk to Judge Wallace.

Justice Kennedy and Judges Walker and Crabb comprised the AJS panel that selected Judge Wallace for the Devitt Award, which is generally regarded as the most prestigious honor conferred on a member of the federal judiciary. The award recognizes "significant contributions to the administration of justice, the advancement of the rule of law, and the improvement of society as a whole."

In accepting the award, Judge Wallace thanked his fellow judges and expressed appreciation for court staff, including his judicial assistants, law clerks, some 60 of whom were in the audience, Clerk of Court Cathy Catterson and Circuit Executive Greg Walters.

"This award is not given to me as an individual. There's a team behind any person who achieves," Judge Wallace observed.

After acknowledging the presence of his wife, Jenee, 11 of his 16 children and a number of grandchildren, he added that, throughout his life, he had "always received the greatest amount of cooperation and encouragement from my family."

Judge Wallace has had a remarkable 50-year career in the law, mostly as a federal judge. He was appointed a U.S. district judge in San Diego in 1970 by President Nixon. Elevated to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1972, Judge Wallace served for 24 years as an active judge on the nation's largest federal appellate court, the last five in an executive role as chief circuit judge. He took semi-retired "senior status" in 1996, but continues to hear appeals and fulfill other court duties.

Since 1972, Judge Wallace has been involved in the rule of law movement, which seeks to promote the concepts and ideals of an independent judiciary and impartial judicial system in developing countries around the world. To date, he has worked directly with judiciaries in more than 50 countries on every continent. His extensive work in this area prompted the Devitt selection panel to note that Judge Wallace has "found new dimensions for the role of senior judge. ... He continues to perform this pioneering work not only as a student of the law and of judicial systems, but as a compassionate, concerned human being."

A San Diego native, Judge Wallace was born in 1928 and grew up in a low income neighborhood on the city's southeast side. Family circumstances required him to work from an early age and he held a variety of jobs before entering the Navy in 1946. After an honorable discharge from military service, he enrolled at San Diego State University, graduating in 1952 with honors and distinction. He went on to receive his LL.B. in 1955 from the University of California Boalt Hall School of Law, where he served on the California Law Review. He joined a San Diego law firm, where he specialized in civil trial matters and later became a partner. He remained in private practice until his nomination to the federal court by President Nixon in 1970.

In the local community, Judge Wallace has a long affiliation with the Boy Scouts of America, serving on the local chapter's board of directors and executive committee from 1977 to 1993, during which he co-chaired a committee to develop scouting in African-American and Hispanic San Diego communities. A Mormon, he has been active in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, serving in local and regional governing posts. He also was vice president of the San Diego County Bar Association and a member of the county nominating committee for the Red Cross.

AJS, founded in 1913, is an independent, national, nonpartisan organization of judges, lawyers, and other members of the public who seek to improve the justice system. AJS, which brings a public perspective to justice system issues, has the mission to secure and promote an independent and qualified judiciary and fair system of justice.

The Devitt Distinguished Service to Justice Award is named for the late Edward J. Devitt, longtime chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. The award, made annually, honors Article III judges whose careers have been exemplary, measured by their significant contributions to the administration of justice, advancement of the rule of law, and the improvement of society as a whole. It is administered by AJS with funding provided by the Dwight D. Opperman Foundation, Minneapolis. The honor includes \$15,000 and is symbolized by an inscribed crystal obelisk.